



REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-9 and 11-13 remain active in this case.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kumio et al. (JP 2001-272926); Claims 5, 8, and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kumio et al. and in view of Mitsuaki (JP 2000-100358); and Claim 13 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kumio et al. in view of Tsuburaya et al. (US Pat No. 6,407,500).

In response to the outstanding grounds for rejection, submitted herewith is a certified translation of Applicants' Japanese priority application, whereby Applicants perfect their claim to priority under 35 USC §119, and are accorded the April 20, 2001 priority filing date of Japanese priority application No. 2001-122557.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully traverse the outstanding grounds for rejection on the basis that the applied Kumio et al. reference is not a valid prior art reference insofar as the publication date of Kumio et al. is October 5, 2001, which is after Applicants' perfected priority date of April 20, 2001. Removal of the Kumio et al. reference from consideration is thus believed in order and is respectfully requested.

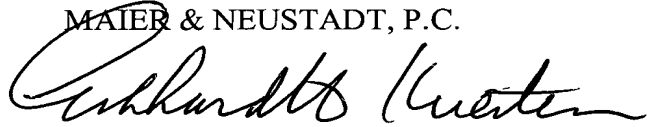
Consequently, the outstanding grounds for rejection, each of which relies on the Kumio et al. reference, are overcome. The present application is therefore believed to be in

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condition for allowance, and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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